



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Announces \$3 Billion Investment in Agriculture, Animal Health, and Nutrition; Unveils New Climate Partnership Initiative, Requests Public Input

Comprehensive Package of Investments Targets Urgent Challenges Facing Agriculture Today

Press Release

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WASHINGTON, September 29, 2021 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced a comprehensive set of investments to address challenges facing America’s agricultural producers. These include assistance to address challenges and costs associated with drought, animal health, market disruptions for agricultural commodities, and school food supply chain issues. Secretary Vilsack also outlined and requested public comments on a new climate partnership initiative designed to create new revenue streams for producers via market opportunities for commodities produced using climate-smart practices.

“American agriculture currently faces unprecedented challenges on multiple fronts,” said Vilsack. “The coronavirus pandemic has impacted every stage of our food supply chain, from commodity production through processing and delivery. Farmers, ranchers and forest landowners increasingly experience the impacts of climate change as severe

storms, floods, drought and wildfire events damage their operations and impact their livelihoods. We know these challenges will continue into 2022, and others may emerge. Through this comprehensive set of investments, USDA will take action to prevent the spread of African Swine Fever, assist producers grappling with drought and market disruptions, and help school nutrition professionals obtain nutritious food for students. Tackling these challenges head-on better positions USDA to respond in the future as new challenges emerge.”

Comprehensive Investment Package – Details Announced Today

USDA is preparing \$3 billion in investments that will support drought resilience and response, animal disease prevention, market disruption relief, and purchase of food for school nutrition programs. The support will be made available via the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). Specifically, funds will be used to provide:

- **\$500 million to support drought recovery and encourage the adoption of water-smart management practices.** From rising temperatures and heat waves, to early snow melt and low rainfall, record-breaking drought has affected producers across the country and has left ranchers with bare winter pastures and short on hay and pushed crop producers to adjust to running their operations with a fraction of the water usually available. This assistance will target these challenges and enable USDA’s Farm Production and Conservation agencies to deliver much needed relief and design drought resilience efforts responsive to the magnitude of this crisis.
- **Up to \$500 million to prevent the spread of African Swine Fever (ASF)** via robust expansion and coordination of monitoring, surveillance, prevention, quarantine, and eradication activities through USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. ASF outbreaks have proven devastating in other parts of the world due to lost production and trade. It is critical for all of us to work together to stop the spread of this disease.
- **\$500 million to provide relief from agricultural market disruption**, such as increased transportation challenges, availability and cost of certain materials, and other near-term obstacles related to the marketing and distribution of certain

commodities, as part of Secretary Vilsack's work as co-chair of the Biden-Harris Administration's Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force.

- **Up to \$1.5 billion to provide assistance to help schools respond to supply chain disruptions.** Throughout the pandemic, school food professionals have met extraordinary challenges to ensure every child can get the food they need to learn, grow and thrive. But circumstances in local communities remain unpredictable, and supply chains for food and labor have been stressed and at times disrupted. These funds will support procurement of agricultural commodities and enable USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to enhance the toolbox for school nutrition professionals working hard to make sure students have reliable access to healthy meals. Today's announcement builds on the range of work that USDA has been doing to identify ongoing issues school districts face during this difficult time and provide the resources, tools and flexibility they need to serve students healthy and nutritious meals.

This set of targeted investments will address unmet needs in our food system, and complement a suite of programs USDA is implementing in response to COVID-19, including the Department's [Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative](#) and the longer-term [Build Back Better](#) initiative designed to address supply chain vulnerabilities and transform our food system based on lessons from COVID-19.

Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Initiative: Request for Information

USDA is committed to partnering with agriculture, forestry and rural communities to develop climate solutions that strengthen rural America. Today, Secretary Vilsack announced a new initiative to finance the deployment of climate-smart farming and forestry practices to aid in the marketing of climate-smart agricultural commodities. Guided by science, USDA will support a set of pilot projects that provide incentives to implement climate smart conservation practices on working lands and to quantify and monitor the carbon and greenhouse gas benefits associated with those practices. The pilots could rely on the Commodity Credit Corporation's specific power to aid in expansion or development of new and additional markets. The Department published a Request for Information (RFI) seeking public comment and input on design of new initiative.

“Through extreme weather, drought and fire, our agriculture producers are on the frontlines of climate change,” said Vilsack. “The new Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Initiative will support pilots that create new market opportunities for commodities produced using climate-smart practices and position U.S. farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners as leaders in addressing climate change. The pilots will invest in the science, monitoring and verification to measure the benefits of these climate smart practices. Today, we ask for public input to inform our decision making and enhance the design of this initiative.”

Comments may be provided on or before 11:59 p.m. EST on November 1, 2021 via the [Federal Register, Docket ID: USDA-2021-0010](#). Feedback will be used to inform design of the new Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Initiative. USDA is seeking input specifically on:

- The current state of climate-smart commodity markets,
- Systems for quantification,
- Options and criteria for evaluation,
- Use of information collected,
- Potential protocols,
- Options for review and verification,
- Inclusion of historically underserved communities.

Comments are encouraged from farmers and farmer organizations, commodity groups, livestock producer groups, environmental organizations, agriculture businesses and technology companies, environmental market organizations, renewable energy organizations, Tribal organizations and governments, organizations representing historically underrepresented producers, organizations representing historically underrepresented communities and private corporations.

USDA is committed to equity in program delivery and explicitly seeks input on how to best serve historically underrepresented producers and communities. This aligns with the Justice40 initiative, an effort to ensure that Federal agencies work with states and local communities to deliver at least 40% of the overall benefits from Federal investments in climate and clean energy to disadvantaged communities.

Insights gained through this process will inform development of a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) soliciting Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Initiative project proposals that encourage the adoption of climate-smart practices and promote markets for climate-smart commodities. USDA plans to announce the NOFA this fall, with project proposals accepted early next year.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis. Through climate-smart agriculture and forestry partnerships, USDA aims to enhance and create new markets and streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers and private foresters and strengthen rural economies while also improving protocols to measure, monitor and track carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA to pursue a coordinated approach alongside stakeholders, including State, local and Tribal governments.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

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